

# **Ministry of Social Development's Social Cohesion Framework**

**25 March 2022**

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## Submitter Details

1. Nelson Marlborough District Health Board (NMDHB) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH has a duty to reduce adverse environmental effects on the health of people and communities and to improve, promote and protect their health pursuant under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956. NMH welcomes the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Ministry of Social Development's Social Cohesion Framework.
2. Please note that the Public Health Service has been busy working on the COVID response, and as such this submission is brief.

## General Comments:

3. NMH commends the Ministry for the creating a Social Cohesion Framework that enables all sectors to improve social cohesion. All diverse communities living in New Zealand should have a sense of belonging and their values recognised. Trust in others is an important indicator of how people feel about members of their community. High levels of trust facilitate co-operative behaviour among people and contribute to people's ability to develop positive relationships with others. There are many health benefits to higher levels of perceived social connectedness: lower blood pressure rates, better immune responses, and lower levels of stress hormones, all of which contribute to the prevention of chronic disease<sup>1</sup>. Whereas discrimination is increasingly recognised as a determinant of health and driver of inequalities. It can create tensions and divisions in communities and affect the quality of care offered to different groups. Actual violence or fear of violence stemming from discrimination can cause social isolation and misery for individuals and communities. Experience of, or fear of discrimination may lead individuals and families to avoid mainstream cultural institutions, including health care services, in which discrimination may occur.<sup>2</sup> There is evidence that exposure to discrimination and racism is significantly associated with poor mental health and lower physical functioning, smoking and cardiovascular disease<sup>3</sup>.
4. Nelson Marlborough Health endorses the Framework that reduces discrimination, and support community initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion. A key success indicator of connecting and empowering community groups should be a demonstrated equitable and fair integration into New Zealand society for all ages,

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<sup>1</sup> Uchino, B., Cacioppo, J., & Kiecolt-Glase, J. (1996). *The relationship between social support and physiological processes: A review with emphasis on underlying mechanisms and implications for health*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119 (3), 488-531

<sup>2</sup> Burgess DJ, Ding Y, Hargreaves M, van Ryn M, Phelan S. 2008. *The association between perceived discrimination and underutilization of needed medical and mental health care in a multi-ethnic community sample*. *Journal of Healthcare for the Poor and Underserved* 19, 814- 911

<sup>3</sup> Harris R, Tobias M, Jeffreys M, Waldegrave K, Karlsen S, Nazroo J. 2006. *Racism and health: the Relationship between experience of racial discrimination and health in New Zealand*. *Social Science and Medicine* 63 (6): 1428-41

genders and backgrounds. The different needs within each group (e.g., Māori and Pasifika, gender diverse, seniors, former refugees and those with disabilities) should be identified. At the same time, the integration policies of key agencies should also be reviewed to gauge if they are effective and could be put into community-based strategies and action plans.

5. NMH commends MSD for grounding this framework on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and a te ao Māori approach. NMH agrees that Te Tiriti was New Zealand's first social cohesion document.
6. NMH recently made comment on the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs Strategy and many of the comments made in that Strategy are also applicable here:
  - a. NMH supports community-led initiatives to improve employment outcomes for diverse communities. It is important to connect with existing community groups or organisations that have been well-established before setting up any new initiatives. For instance, in our region, we have organisations such as Multicultural Nelson Tasman, Victory Community Centre, Red Cross Refugee Services, and English Language Partners. They have been supporting migrants and former refugees to resettle and integrate into the community in the past decades.
  - b. It is important that the government sector sets a good example by increasing employment opportunities among diverse communities. Inequality in job opportunities and pay gaps need to be addressed to achieve a fair, transparent and inclusive society.
  - c. NMH supports the development of resources for workplace diversity competency for use across public and private sectors, this could include the promotion of diversity and inclusion in position descriptions and staff development programmes could be promoted
  - d. NMH supports the implementation of an Employment Action Plan that prioritises diverse community members who face multiple barriers to enter and succeed in the labour market, including women. Further educational support could also be given to people whose first language is not English.
  - e. NMH supports the establishment of an Diversity Leaders forum, and making funding and other opportunities for capability development (e.g. governance training) more easily accessible for smaller and emerging diverse communities, and for marginalised groups
7. NMH notes that the consultative process for this Framework has been restricted to specific groups. Given the content of the Framework, it is recommended that the process itself also garners social cohesion by enabling as many groups as possible to participate in its development.

## **Specific Comments**

8. This Framework would benefit from a section on strategic links to other Government documents. For instance the Office of Ethnic Affairs are currently working on their own Strategy and it would be useful to see the linkages between the documents.
9. Page 5 articulates a holistic overview of the Framework showing the visions, founding principles, ways to foster social cohesion and outcomes. NMH supports this approach. NMH notes that the opportunity to share knowledge is missing from the Overview. It is important that people can learn from each other and share information but the concept of education/knowledge is not captured in the Overview currently.

## **Measurement**

10. *Table One: People, whanau and communities section (page 7)/ Table 3: Institutions, systems and all sectors:* Citizen participation in public decision-making and problem solving gives people a way of contributing to the communities they live in. This contribution is an important aspect of people's wellbeing. It can bring an ability to influence decisions, as well as opportunities to connect with others in the community and to learn and understand. Underpinning the process is the sense of being valued by community leaders and others in the community. Information on how to take part in decision-making processes needs to be available to a variety of people (e.g. different age and cultural groups) in a variety of methods (reading material, face to face communication/telephone and web based). Interest and community groups are often directly involved with people who may not feel comfortable or be able to provide feedback, and these groups can act as liaisons to leading agencies.
11. This could be measured by analysing the proportion of people who vote in central and local body elections, and investigating the representational makeup in elections and on boards
12. *Table Two: Places that we live, work, play and learn (page 8):* This section is broad, and covers many aspects that are covered to some extent with other monitors such as the [Living Standards Framework](#) and [Canterbury Wellbeing Index](#). It would be useful to overlay these monitors with the measurements within this Strategy to see what data is missing and still needs to be collected.
13. The quality of the environment, buildings and the network of streets and spaces, defines the way people go about our daily lives. But the design of the built environment may be inclusive for some groups and exclusive for others, for example the convenience and safety of transport routes determine people's choice of travel. The ambience and functionality of a space encourages people to spend time there, in turn shaping lifestyle choices and social engagement and ultimately our physical and mental wellbeing. Making spaces accessible to all is key to

building connections. We need safe environments where all people can obtain services or meet others for recreation. It is difficult to see in the Enabler section specific actions that would lead to making the built environment safer and more accessible.

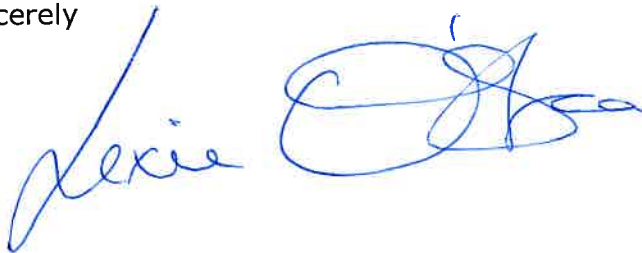
14. *Table 5: Barriers and Enablers (page 16)*

- a. *Leadership/shared purpose*: NMH supports this approach as this requires government agencies to remove silos and work collaborative towards a common goal. Sharing commitment across agencies to resource based on co-benefits is important.
- b. *Willingness*: Valuing relationship building as a key driver of community-led change, this can be done by building trust through shifting the power and resourcing community-led approaches.
- c. *Resourcing*: NMH supports the creation of simpler, quicker, higher-trust funding processes. Instrumental to this is the ability to build capability and capacity of communities to ensure programmes are sustainable and successful.

**Conclusion**

15. NMH thanks Ministry of Social Development for the opportunity to comment on the Social Cohesion Framework.

Yours sincerely



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